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SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY MINSK SENDS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PINR CASC CVIS BO

SUBJECT: MFA ENCOURAGED BY USG INTEREST IN AMBASSADORS' MEETING

REF: MOORE-BOEHME TELCON 04/08/08

Charge Relays Willingness for Ambassadors' Meeting

¶1. (SBU) Charge relayed April 8 to MFA Americas Directorate Chief Vadim Lazerko USG willingness to participate in discussions at the level of Ambassadors in Brussels on or after April 10 (ref). Lazerko stated that this was "very good news" and an encouraging step, and he agreed to be in contact regarding the timing and location of the meeting.

Charge Protests Approaches To Diplomatic, Local Staff

¶2. (SBU) Charge took the opportunity to express dismay at the direct approach to an American diplomat who was offered enticements and pressures to work for the Belarusian KGB (BKGB) April 7. He also protested pressure on the Embassy's Belarusian staff, which has increased to particularly high levels in recent weeks. Charge stressed that the Embassy had complied in October 2007 with the Belarusian request to release to the GOB the names of all LES, and emphasized that they are law-abiding citizens of Belarus who do not merit this harassment.

MFA Says Score "Three to One"

¶3. (SBU) Although Lazerko said that he was not able to comment on the BKGB pressure, he claimed that three Belarusian diplomats have now been approached by U.S. intelligence services, including the Defense Attaché (DATT) in Washington and two "security" attaches in Washington and New York. Lazerko issued his own protest about these alleged approaches, claiming that this made "the score three to one." Lazerko noted that the Belarusian protest about these approaches had already been raised by Belarusian Charge Kravchenko with EUR/UMB Director Boehme. Lazerko agreed to pass our protest to the relevant authorities.

Request for Consular Access, Clarification of Visa Issues

¶4. (SBU) In addition, Charge reiterated Embassy request for MFA's assistance in securing immediate consular access to AMCIT Emanuel Zeltser and stressed increasing family and Congressional concern over Zeltser's treatment and access to medical care. Lazerko said that he would relay the request to the MFA's Consular Department.

¶5. (SBU) Delivering MFA Spokesman Andrei Popov's visa, issued within 24 hours of receipt, Charge reminded Lazerko that the Embassy continues processing several categories of visas, including diplomats, official travelers and humanitarian cases. While pleased with delivery of Popov's visa, Lazerko likened its issuance to merely a drop in the bucket. He protested issuance of only

diplomats and urged widening the Embassy's accepted visa applicant pool.

¶6. (SBU) Charge expressed disappointment to Lazerko that that the Belarusian Embassy in Warsaw has informed several official travelers that they had were not permitted by Minsk to issue visas to Americans. Lazerko asked Charge to "take his hint" that because issuance of temporary official visas would allow Embassy size to grow beyond the mandated 17 at any given time, it would likely not be possible. Charge protested that such a policy was unnecessarily restrictive, and requested that such a decision be formalized if it is to be enforced. Lazerko said that he would clarify the issue in the near future.

Moore
Cloud